Title:

Brokers, dual-role mediators and professional interpreters: a discourse-based examination of mediated speech and some of the roles and interests that linguistic mediators serve.

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Abstract:

The advent of the professional interpreter over the last 30 years has occurred with a series of developments that have sought to define, articulate and delineate practices of behaviour so that interpreters are recognised as a distinct group. One development is the distinction that interpreting is inter-lingual transfer performed by paid and trained professionals, while the type of linguistic mediation practised by brokers, multiple-role helpers or volunteers is something else, eg. ‘lay mediation’. A hallmark of professional groups is a code of ethics, and in codes for interpreters, ethical principles such as *accuracy*, *impartiality* and even *clarity of role boundaries* appear regularly. Conference interpreting practices that are based on a conduit model and the fidelity of transfer of all source speech have imposed themselves on many codes of conduct and have shaped contemporary theory and pedagogy of interpreting. The ‘social turn’ in Interpreting Studies (cf. Pöchhacker, 2009) has not only kick-started investigations into macro- and micro-social dynamics that pertain to interpreting (and how linguistic mediation and linguistically-mediated situations re-shape social relations), but allowed a re-appraisal of phenomena that have hardly been absent from interpreter-mediated events: acknowledgement of social and power relations, advocacy and even activism.

This paper seeks to contribute to discussions on social relations by presenting a discourse analysis of three real-life interactions that feature mediators with different roles: (child) broker; dual-role (teacher/lay interpreter) mediator; professional interpreter. Examination of the three mediators’ forms and conventions of linguistic mediation reveals differences in the way others’ talk is re-presented: from private dyads and a recontextualisation of speech to variation in the strategies employed by mediators as they deal with varying senses of *duty* - to source speech, to their role to others, and to the interests of others and their own interests. The empirical data of this study attest to differences in communicative strategies adopted by the linguistic mediators. But at the same time, features such as socially-motivated alterations and mitigations are found not only in the speech of non-professionals, but also in that of the professional interpreter. Contemporary interpreting can be conceived of as verbal (or signed) positioning along continuums of practice that reflect occupational (role), macro-social (power) and micro-social (setting, context) relations. This ‘positioning’ that the interpreter is required to perform is itself something no less value-laden and pertaining to ethics than other concepts such as *accuracy* and *impartiality* which guide but which need not dominate discussions on ethics.

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References:

Pöchhacker, Franz. (2009). The turns of Interpreting Studies. In: Hansen, G., Chesterman, A. & Gerzymisch-Arbogast, H. (Eds.) *Efforts and Models in Interpreting and Translation Research: A Tribute to Daniel Gile*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. 25-46.